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HAINES BLOCK PREPLAN BRIEFING



Peninsula Resource Area
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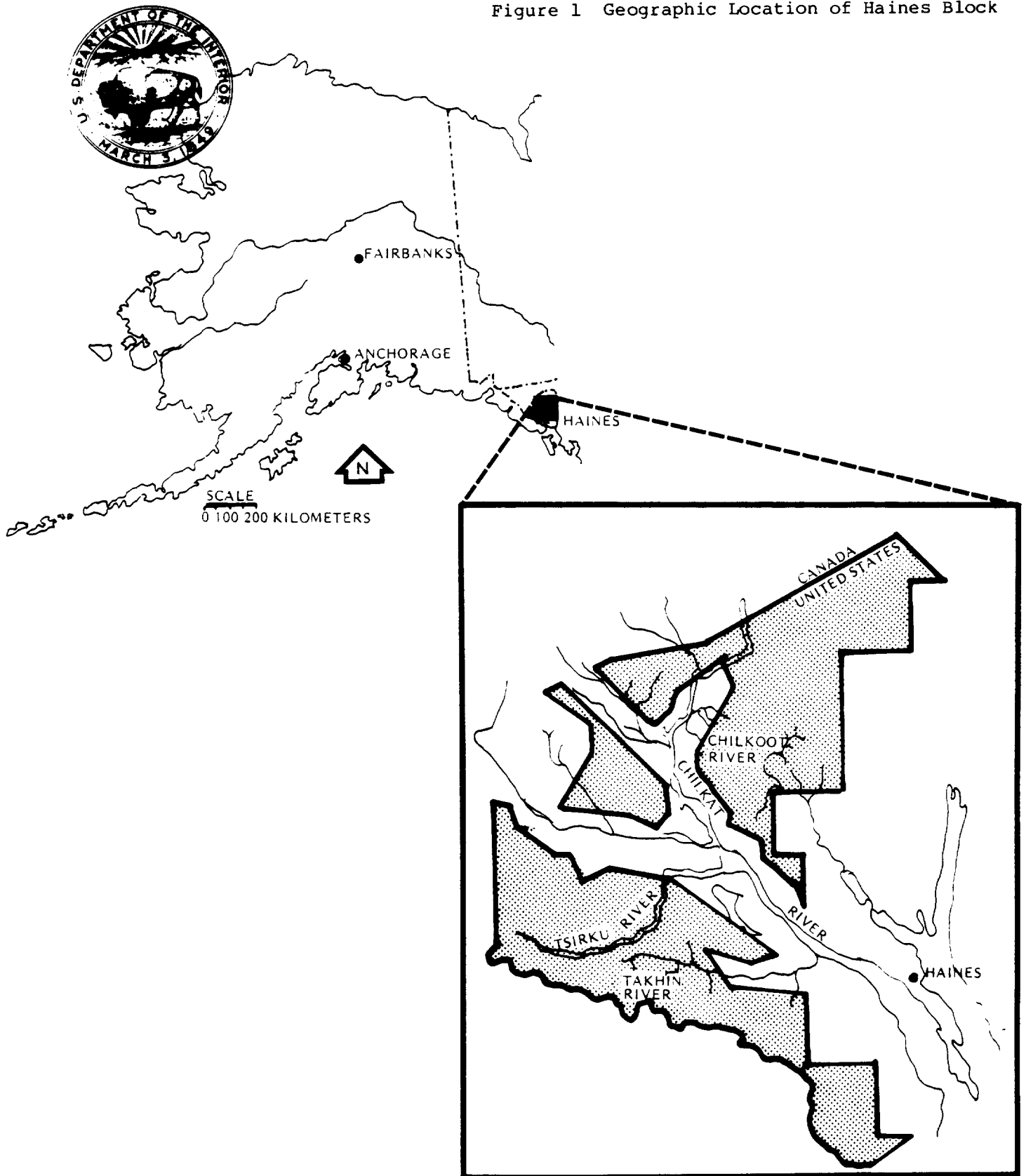
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Figure 1 Geographic Location of Haines Block



Currently there is no land use plan for over 517,000 acres of BLM and State Selected lands in Southeast Alaska. Although there remain numerous BLM managed parcels throughout the Alaska panhandle, the immediate concern focuses on four adjacent blocks located in the geographic span between Skagway, Alaska and the Northeastern boundary of the Glacier Bay National Monument (Figure 1). The focus of this preplanning effort to date has concentrated upon 1) the identification of issues relative to BLM land management, 2) an inventory of existing reference and planning documentation relative to the geographic region and, 3) contemplation of alternative actions for multiple use land management.

I. ISSUES

- A. Resource Conflicts: Exploitation of mineral resources and/or recreation based development may cause downstream impact to nationally recognized bald eagle overwintering habitat.
- B. Planning Compatibility: The relative success of state and local land use planning depends on the compatibility of BLM land management.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA:

A. General Features

Approximately 430,000 acres of public domain lands contiguous with 87,000 acres of State Selected lands are located along the United States-Canada border within a 20-50 mile radius of

Haines, Alaska. These are within the Chilkat-Baranof Mountains and Boundary Ranges of two physiographically distinct terranes. Physically similar, the geologic terranes are characterized by flat, narrow alluvial valley floors, narrow rolling ridgetops and long, steep slopes with local relief of 1000 to 6000 feet. The headwaters of the Tsirku, Takhin, Chilkoot, and Chilkat River valleys and numerous side drainages originate from glaciers which cover a significant portion of the study area. These generally unpopulated lands range in landcover from Black cottonwood alluvial basins, mountainside forests of mixed lodgepole pine, Hemlock subspecies and Sitka Spruce, dense treeline alder shrublands through ericaceous tundra to the mountaintops or permanent ice levels.

The total population within the Skagway quadrangle is approximately 2200 residents located principally at Haines, Skagway and Klukwan. None of these population centers are within the study boundaries. Since the early 1970's, the region has experienced a severe economic downturn. The principal fish processing plant at Haines closed as did the two forest products mills at Haines since 1970. The White Pass & Yukon Railway historically connecting Skagway with Whitehorse British Columbia recently terminated operations. Current economic participation is limited to commercial fishing, two small lumber milling operations at Haines, recreation, tourism, transportation, general service industries, and moderate participation in the public sector. Unemployment levels may be as high as any region in the State.

B. Resource Values

1. Mineral Resources

Extreme variety of mineral potential has been recorded within the Skagway quadrangle (Figure 2), principally within one of the two local geologic terranes. All of the lands within the Haines Block are presently open to mineral entry.

Placer Mining for gold here has continued since 1898.

Potential is limited to gold bearing quartz veins in a known slate belt generally south and west of Klukwan. Six to eight active claims of record are located on Porcupine, McKinley, Nugget, and Little Salmon creeks.

Iron Mountain near Klukwan is a major location of known magnetite and ilmenite ore. This is one location along an ultra-basic rockbelt along the perimeter of the Craig subterrane which extends from Klukwan to the U.S. border. Magnetic disturbances are common along this belt. Patented claims are located east of Klukwan.

Figure 2 Location of Mineral Resources

Iron (Magnetite)

Placer Gold

Sulfides



Massive sulfides are present twenty miles west of Klukwan near Mount Henry Clay. Deposits of barite, gold, silver, lead, zinc, copper, cobalt, and nickel have been identified by the Bureau of Mines and 445 claims near the headwaters of Jarvis and Glacier Creek have been filed by Bear Creek Mining Company, and Southeastern Minerals Joint Venture (1983). This area is within the same terrane as the Windy-Craggy deposits to the north which have been under study since 1958 for development by Falconbridge, Ltd., of Canada.

BLM lands northeast of Klukwan are within the Taku tectono-stratigraphic terrane which is not currently under investigation by either the Bureau of Mines or the State of Alaska. There is little information available concerning this area beyond the terrane classification which generalizes that the relatively modern formations are low in potential mineralization.

In summary, investigations by private industry and the Bureau of Mines have identified several areas within the Haines Block which may have commercial mineral potential. The Bureau of Mines and the State of Alaska are currently cooperating in a study of the Mount Henry Clay area which is funded for the next two years.

2. Forestry Values

The BLM lands are bordered by the Haines State Forest which was established in 1982 and contains approximately 229,000 acres. The State has classified timber on the basis of physical suitability for access and harvest without irreversible damage to soils and watershed, and where there is reasonable assurance that adequate reforestation will begin within five years following harvest.

The staff has protracted this classification; "Operable Timber" to BLM lands by utilizing existing high altitude photo imagery (infrared). Three major zones of timber fitting the classification resulted (Figure 3):

1. Upper Chilkat River
2. Upper Chilkoot River
3. Tahini River watershed

3. Recreation Use

A recreation inventory and analysis was prepared as part of the Haines Klukwan Cooperative Resource Study (Alaska, DNR, Division of Parks & Recreation 1984). The State of Alaska has surveyed and categorized recreation activities and

Figure 3 Location of Operable Timber

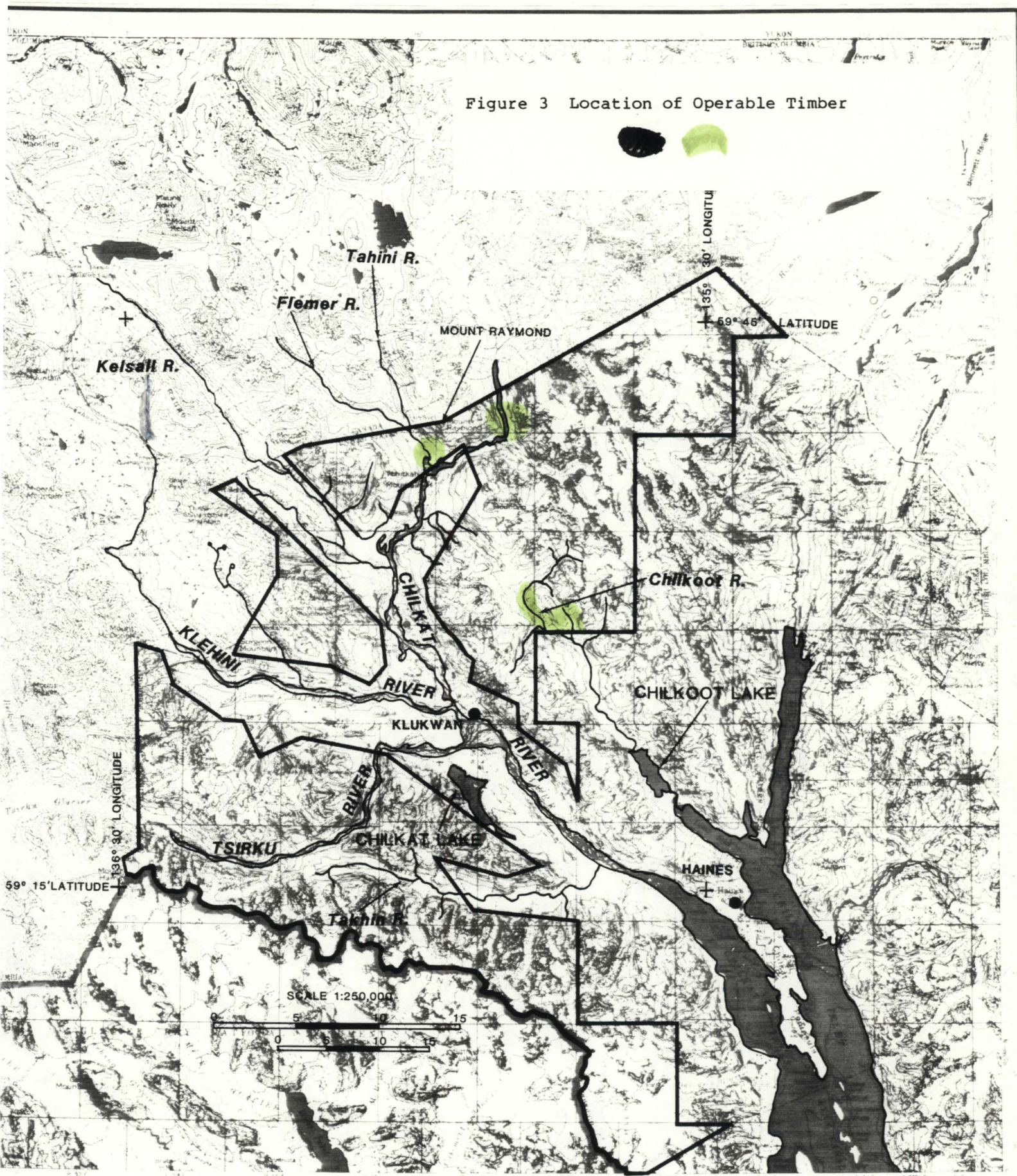


Figure 4 Highlighted Recreation Use;
Commercial River Rafting



Haines area population attitudes. The mode of transportation most used by area residents was found to be motorboat, with road vehicle use high especially for day use activities. Nearly all of the BLM lands are lacking road access, and also lack truly navigable river access. However, it is known that significant aircraft access utilization occurs within watersheds in the study area.

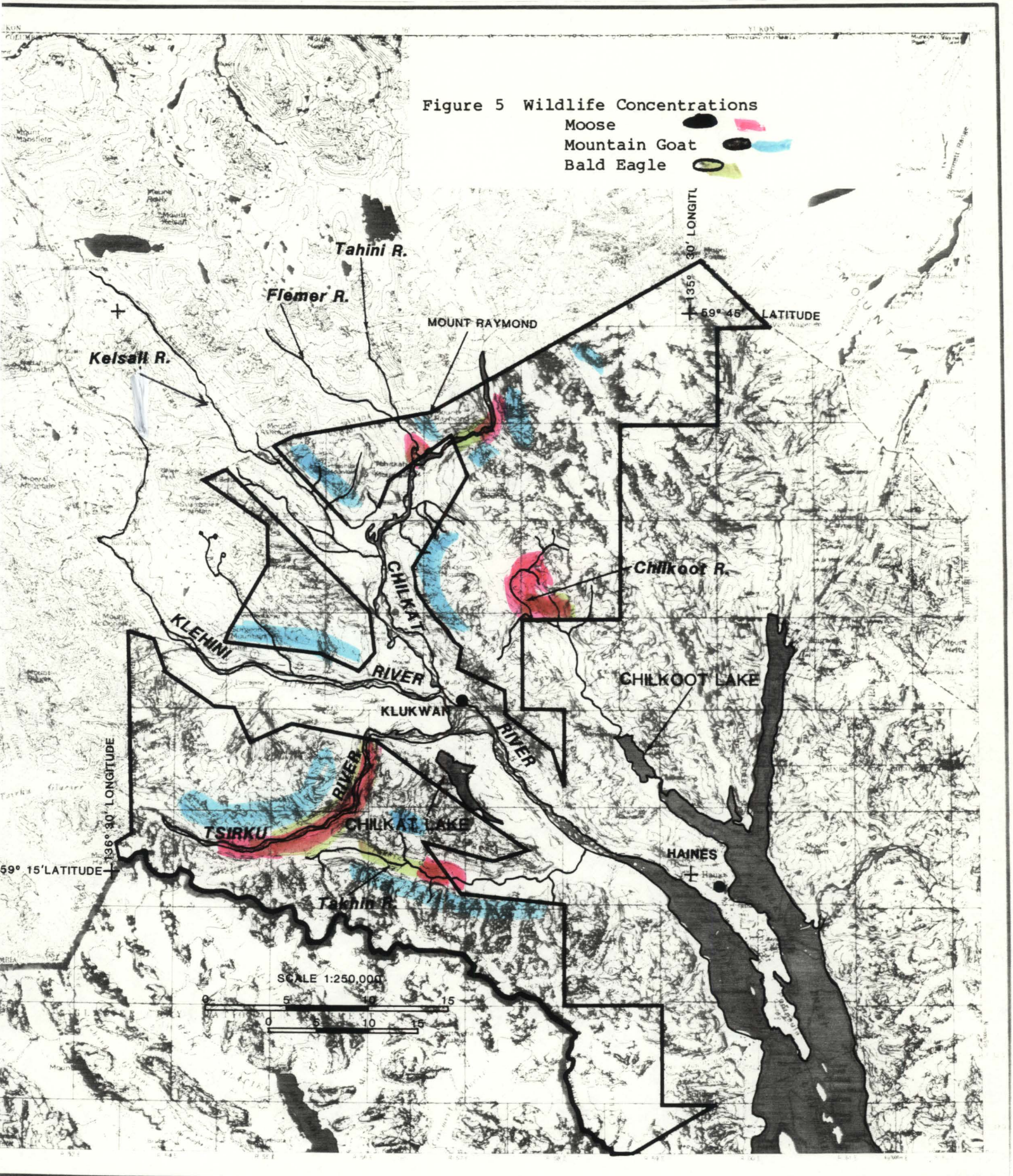
Two commercial river rafting services, The Chilkat Guides and the Alaska Cross Country Guide Service operate from Haines (Figure 4). These operators have been negotiating headquarters and access development on the Tsirku River with BLM since at least 1979. The Resource Area has attempted to discourage authorization of commercial development until more information concerning land capability of the Tsirku Valley was known. There is, at the present, potential for competitive FLPMA leases and permits, as well as possible airport leases in the Tsirku valley.

4. Wildlife and Fishery Values

Previous studies by BLM, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and others have identified and inventoried wildlife and fisheries on some of the BLM lands (Figure 5). Moderate populations of large and small mammals occur throughout. Mountain Goats are present in significant numbers. Their habitat requirements are of particular importance in relation to development likely to occur on BLM lands.

Figure 5 Wildlife Concentrations

Moose 
Mountain Goat 
Bald Eagle 



Salmon, other anadromous, and resident fresh water fishes are known to occur within the Haines Block. Salmon spawning and rearing habitat may be of significant importance in these watersheds.

The river valleys host large numbers of wintering bald eagles. Of significance is the availability of late run salmon as the birds' primary food source.

The significance of these biological resources on BLM lands includes recreation use, subsistence, and economic values. There is also a more complex interrelationship between fisheries, their habitat and the effect or contribution to bald eagle habitat within the Haines State Forest and Eagle Preserve.

C. RESOURCE CONFLICTS

Potential impacts to the BLM lands which may occur as a result of development actions have not been thoroughly assessed. However, broad categories can be summarized for the sake of preplanning analysis:

1. Impacts due to alteration or removal of habitat in either a localized area or downstream of BLM lands.
2. Compatibility of human uses within watersheds.

3. Compatibility with existing land use lands and land management designations (areas).

Therefore, without enumerating these potential impacts, we can visualize potential tradeoffs and also realize environmental and political constraints which may affect multiple use on BLM managed lands. For example; Recreation development and mineral development within the Tsirku watershed (and viewshed) may be compatible only to the extent of acceptable compromise to either activity. The downstream affects of mineral extraction include alterations of water quality. This may seriously impede salmon spawning and thereby affect wintering Bald Eagle food availability. The action may have a net affect upon State owned lands within the Eagle Preserve, an area designated for habitat protection.

References and sources of ecological data have been partially indexed for the Haines area and are available at the District Office. The application of resource survey information to BLM managed lands remains to be done.

D. Land Use Plans

The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources; the U.S. Forest Service, the Haines Borough and City of Haines have each compiled planning documents. Although there is little or no overlap between the BLM lands and the planning areas, the plans concern adjacent lands.

Issues addressed by these plans deal most directly with the interrelationship between economic development and the protection of critical resource values. As stated earlier, the compatibility of BLM and other land management efforts is essential to insure overall success.

III. ALTERNATIVES

Courses of action depend heavily in future (projected) funding. We have summarized four alternatives:

- A. Adopt existing land use plans if consistent with BLM regulations
- B. RMP
- C. Disposal
- D. Transfer of Jurisdiction

IV. DISCUSSION

Section 202(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 mandated the development of land use plans for public lands regardless of whether such lands were previously classified, withdrawn or otherwise designated for one or more uses. The planning alternatives A and B identified are subject to the Department's responsibility in accordance with FLPMA. Alternative A may be the least costly planning alternative, as well as the quickest in producing a product.

However, in theory BLM may have two additional alternatives relating to land management if not specifically land use planning. Disposal of public lands may be possible under either the Alaska Statehood Act or the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Acts and amendments. Transfer of management jurisdiction to the U.S. Forest Service is a presumptive alternative. The land use planning responsibilities of the BLM may be significantly reduced if either of these course of action were completed.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

No attempt to weigh these alternatives has been made. A procedural course is recommended.

A. Pursue Planning Initiative

1. Continue research and data collection as it relates to the establishment of a planning base. This will assure the availability of information on which to base land management decisions in the interim period.
2. Proceed toward the adoption of existing State, Local or U.S. Forest Service plans concerning adjacent areas. Undertake compilation of references, field check for applicability and insure regulatory consistency.

3. Initiate a Resource Management Plan Process. Formalize a preplan document and meet publication requirements for a Notice of Intent.

B. Non-RMP Alternatives

1. Establish the legality and appropriateness of the non-RMP action alternatives.
2. Investigate and negotiate the non-RMP alternatives with the State, Natives, and U.S. Forest Service.
3. Delay the publication of an NOI to allow development of the non-RMP alternatives.